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University of Virginia, Hotel E
West Range, University of Virginia Campus
Charlottesville
Virginia

HABS No. VA-193-M

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, HOTEL E

HABS No. VA-193-M

Location:

West Range, University of Virginia, Charlottesville,
Albemarle County, Virginia

USGS Charlottesville West Quadrangle, 7.5 minute series
Universal Transverse Mercator coordinate:
17.718905.4212360

Present Owner
and Occupant:

University of Virginia

Present Use:

Faculty dining facility for the Colonnade Club

Significance:

Hotel E, located at the southwest corner of Thomas Jefferson's "academical village," the University of Virginia, was completed and ready for use by 1822. The design is characteristic of Jefferson's interpretation of Roman classicism which subsequently had a profound influence on southern architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1818 the Virginia Assembly appropriated \$15,000 to found a state university and appointed a commission with Thomas Jefferson as chairman to select a site, choose plans, and work out its operation.¹ Jefferson used his influence to select his native county of Albemarle as the future site of the University in a valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains, easily seen from the telescope in his reading room at Monticello.

By 1867, with some advice from his friends Benjamin Latrobe and William Thornton, Jefferson had worked out a plan for the university which had a round-domed building at the head of an open-ended U-shaped plan.² The domed building, called the Rotunda, was a half-scale model of the Roman Pantheon. It housed the library and administrative offices for the university. The arms of the U-shaped plan consisted of one-story dormitory rooms for the students interspersed with ten pavilions, each of which was dedicated to one of ten disciplines of study. Each pavilion's design was based on a different interpretation of Palladian Roman classicism. The purpose of the pavilions was to house a professor in the rooms upstairs and hold classes in the classrooms downstairs.

Jefferson's academical village plan consisted of a continuous colonnade that linked the pavilions and lawn rooms to the imposing centerpiece, the Rotunda. In addition to the terraced lawn and surrounding historical buildings there are gardens separated with serpentine walls from the East and West Back Streets now known as the Ranges. Each Range consisted of student dormitory rooms with three hotels on each side.

The workmen hired for the construction of the university from 1819-1822 were very well known throughout Virginia. George Wilson Spooner (1798-1865) and

Dabney Cosby (1779-1867) completed most of the work on Hotel E. Spooner was the carpenter and in charge of acquiring the lumber. Cosby served as master bricklayer. The university paid Spooner \$1,690.34 and Cosby \$1,165.00 of the total \$4,696.31 total cost for Hotel E.

Some of the other people who worked on Hotel E were:

- Erasmus Sparrow - covered the roof with tin
- Gorman - 4 sills, 3 keystones and \$1.50 each, steps and newell posts, and coping stone
- Bassett & Co. - Dug out cellar and made yards - \$45.54
- Campbell - stone in area and garden walls
- Thorn and Chamberlain - put in door frame - \$2.00
- Crawford - sundries - \$43.60
- Clarke - 138 feet of gutter at 10¢ per foot - \$13.80.

From 1819-1826 the university paid Spooner a total of \$7,076.28. Besides Hotel E, he also worked on Pavilion IX under John Nevilson, built Hotel C and various dorm rooms and possibly worked on the Rotunda in 1826. He was the University Proctor from 1845-1846. In 1853 he was the Rotunda Annex Supervisor.

Dabney Cosby, who earned over \$30,000.00 from the university in under two years, was responsible for the bricklaying of many other buildings throughout Virginia. He built Randolph-Macon College in Boydton, some buildings at Hampden Sydney College, the Buckingham, Sussex, Lunenburg and Halifax County Courthouses and the Goochland County Courthouse with Valentine Parrish.

The Board of Visitors decided to hire five hotelkeepers who would provide meals and adequate housing for the students assigned to them. Jefferson suggested that each hotel be leased to families of different European nationalities so that the students could improve their foreign language skills and expend their cultural experiences. Cocke agreed to this proposal but it proved to be unsuccessful because of the expense of bringing entire families all the way to Charlottesville.³

The 1820's were a weak economic period for Virginia and many men from distinguished families who were hit by this slump applied for the position of hotelkeeper.⁴ From this pool of applicants, six were chosen. The original hotelkeepers were John Gray, who resided in Hotel E, George Washington Spottswood, who managed Hotel F, and Werner Minor, S.B. Chapman and John P. Richeson, each of whom was assigned to one hotel but records do not indicate which ones.⁵ The sixth hotel on the range, presumably Hotel A, served as the house for the University Proctor.⁶

Along with feeding and housing the students, the hotelkeepers were to police the students' rooms for cleanliness and oversee conduct. They had to maintain cleanliness to prevent sickness and to present an environment fitting to the university. It was this final duty that hotelkeepers seemed to have no ability to uphold. They found it hard to enforce gentlemanly conduct among

the students for business and "entertainment" reasons. The hotelkeepers were lenient with the students and tried to establish rapport with them by being friendly and serving fine foods. The students would, in turn, return the favors, with their dollars and continued patronage. Moreover, the camaraderie established between the students was especially enjoyed by the hotelkeepers when nightly entertainments, alcohol and gambling were involved.⁷

A quote from Bruce's History of the University of Virginia, 1818-1819, sums up this situation. "Jefferson, in 1826, complained to Joseph Coolidge that 'competition had made them [the hotelkeepers] obsequious to the wishes of the young men. We must force them [the hotelkeepers] to become auxiliaries towards the preservation of order rather than supporters of irregularities. We shall continue this evil until the renewal of their leases.'"⁸

The severity of the situation continued until the faculty started to enforce ordinances which penalized the hotelkeepers for permitting uncontrolled drinking and gambling in their hotels and boarders' rooms. However, the misconduct continued even after the spring term of 1826 when several hotelkeepers were indicted by a grand jury for gambling.⁹

Some applicants for the positions suggested that two stories be built on the unfinished hotels so that men with families, who would presumably be more responsible, could live there. However, John Gray, Hotel E's first keeper was married with children and proved to be no more steady than the unmarried keepers. Because of his unlawful drinking and gambling with the students, he forfeited his lease in 1826. He did not want to see his family be evicted with him, so he wrote to the faculty head, Mr. Lomax, father of nine himself, to allow his family to remain.

Until 1827, the Board of Visitors held that no woman should manage a hotel on the grounds because inspection and policing of the students' rooms would be difficult. Mrs. Gray, however, had many strong qualifications, including being sister of university proctor Arthur S. Brockenbrough and a "member of an old and distinguished family."¹¹ She was allowed to sublease Hotel E from John Carter who took over the lease after Mr. Gray's removal. She became the most vigorous personality in the circle of hotelkeepers. As Bruce put it, "she was described as an elegant and aristocratic lady, who always wore a white turban after the fashion of the famous Dolley Madison. She was prompt, fair, direct and outspoken."¹² Her husband, after seeking employment as a book agent in the north, moved to Florida and visited his wife and children in Virginia only rarely.¹³

Originally each hotelkeeper was assigned a plot of land on the outskirts of the university so as to grow vegetables for his boarders. The land was not adequate to provide the required harvest and was usually far from the hotels. As the hotelkeepers did not see the use of continuing the cultivation of this land, by 1829 almost all of the food consumed by the students was bought from the neighboring farmers who sold produce, grains and meat. Although the food was of good quality, it was sometimes overpriced and the vendors were unreliable.¹⁴

As Bruce notes, "the Board of Visitors required that the fare should be plentiful, plain, of good and wholesome viands, neatly served and well dressed."¹⁵ In the beginning, some of the hotelkeepers produced luxurious and varied meals to compete for student business, but when the university assigned a particular number of students to each hotel, the quality of food and service dropped considerably. The hotelkeepers were forced to buy large quantities of less expensive foods, such as grains, because now students were required to pay only \$10.00 per month for both room and board. Menus were quite dull and unappetizing and the rooms far from sanitary.

To combat this situation, the administration adopted a menu which was to be followed by all hotelkeepers, but the further complication of the California gold rush during the 1850s led to the inflation of food prices and scarcity of certain foods. What the administration believed was true of the regulated menus was not true in reality.¹⁶

The hotel's size never needed to be changed since competition between hotelkeepers ended early in the university's history. However, many adjustments were made to the hotels during the course of their existence although the exact dates are not known. The first alteration to Hotel E concerned the flat wooden roof which leaked. Hence, the roof was changed into a hip roof and covered with tin. Between 1840 and 1850 the annexes on the West and East Ranges were added to Hotels E and F. The central hallway was lowered in Hotel E considerably in comparison to the 20 foot ceiling height in the neighboring rooms. This was done during the residence of Professor Campbell and his family to accommodate the storage area above the hall. The hall was also narrowed to allow for the stairs to be added for access to the storage area and access to the kitchen and dining areas below which made the life of the hotelkeeper easier.¹⁷

Eventually, the hotels went out of business for lack of patronage from students, who chose to seek better food on Main Street, for the never-ending restrictions on the menus and for the fact that the hotel managers never earned enough profits to make the job worthwhile.¹⁸ About 1902, Stanford White designed a dining hall for the entire university. Located between Hotel E and the amphitheater, it made the idea of the hotels as dining facilities obsolete. The hotels became residences for faculty members.¹⁹

Hotel E's back porch was removed and access to the neighboring range room was added by means of a door in the northwest room to expand the living areas for the residents.²⁰ While Professor Campbell, Dean of the School of Architecture was living in Hotel E., the roof was again reconstructed and raised on account of a fire that blazed through the attic.²¹ The roof was now hipped with angles of 23 degrees and covered with slate shingles. The two chimneys were raised and shifted four inches to the side, presumably to achieve an aesthetic balance.

Some years later, after the last resident, Gaston Moffit, professor of languages, left Hotel E., it went through a few more changes.²² The annex went from being the School of Architecture to being the Dean of Women's office

in the 1960s. It became affiliated with the Colonnade Club in the early 1970s.

The Colonnade Club originated in Pavilion VII, the first completed structure of the university, in the early twentieth century. Serving as a library until the Rotunda was completed, Pavilion VII then became a residence for a bachelor professor with a classroom and kitchen below. After two major additions to the back, Pavilion VII became the Colonnade Club, now able to house several bachelor faculty. The board of the Colonnade Club felt it was important to have a dining area, so they decided to acquire Hotel E. At this point they added a door joining the annex with the southeast room in order to expand the dining facilities. The university dining service serves lunch Monday through Friday to provide faculty members with a place to eat and converse with colleagues.²⁵

PART III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Hotel E, the Colonnade Club Dining Facility, is designed in keeping with Jefferson's interpretation of Roman classicism. This one-story hotel is the structure at the southwest corner of a complex of buildings which is one of the finest works of American architecture. Attached to the northern side of Hotel E are the West Range rooms and on the southern side the more recently built annex. Although Hotel E is in very good condition, it has had several changes in the course of its history which have altered its original appearance.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 1. Over-all dimensions: The dimensions of the west (front) and east (rear) of the hotel are 38' 1" not including the front arcade. The height of the west facade measures 29' 3" from the grade to the peak of the roof. The east facade measures 32' 4" from the brick patio to the roof peak. The north facade measures 30' 10".
 2. Foundations: Thick foundation walls (1' 5") form a flat top water table 7' 7" high on the east facade and 5' 11" height in the north facade. There is no water table on the west facade.
 3. Exterior sheathing: All exterior walls are made of brick laid in Flemish bond on the west, north, and south exterior walls. Below the water table on the east facade is a haphazard American bond varying from three to eight courses due to repairs resulting from the removal of the back porch. On the north facade, the section above the water table is laid in Flemish bond.
 4. Structural system: The 1' 2" thick brick exterior walls are load-bearing. The roof structure is wood frame with one heavy

timber beam running through the center of the attic floor. The structure of the roof has changed twice during the history of Hotel E. The original flat wood shingled roof was changed to a hipped tin-covered roof because of leaks and poor drainage. Due to the fire in the 1950s, the roof was destroyed and a new, higher roof of 23 degree slope was constructed and covered with slate shingles.

5. Arcade and porch:

a. arcade: Terminating at Hotel E, the roof line of the west arcade slopes down from the bottom of the entablature of the hotel. The depth of the hotel's arcade is 13'2," narrowing to 9'3" along the adjoining range rooms. The arcade extends across the entire length of the 38'2" facade. The 14" keystones top the 8'7" x 5'6" hemispherical arches on the range arcade. Running the entire length of the arcade is a 3'4" high water table and a two-brick string course that begins 4'7" above the water table.

b. porch: The back porch was removed at an unknown date. The worn threshold slab below the rear center window and the pieces of wood wedged in around its frame suggest that this opening was once the door to the back porch. The approximate location of the porch is marked by the holes where the porch was once attached to the hotel, but are filled in with new bricks.

6. Chimneys: The hotel's two chimneys are approximately four feet high from the roof and serve four heating fireplaces on the ground floor and two large cooking fireplaces in the cellar. Both chimneys' positions have been shifted outward four inches. The chimney stacks are approximately 3'6" square.

7. Doors: The hotel's original wide, three-paneled front door, with original brass hardware, is set in a recessed entry. Fixed-louver operable shutters measuring 8'6" flank the front entranceway. The rear door is set on the brick patio under the water table.

8. Windows and shutters: The double-hung, nine-over-nine windows measure 2'7" x 6'6". The two front windows' surrounds extend to the ceiling of the arcade. There are also two cellar windows, the tops of which are located 2'3" below the sills of the first floor windows. Each cellar window has a jack arch above its surround. More than half of each cellar window is located below the arcade floor. A dugout well surrounds the lower half of the windows, which are covered by metal grates and allow light into the cellar. The muntins of all the

windows are $3/4$ " and the windows panes measure $10\ 1/4$ " x $12\ 1/4$ ". The ground floor windows are flanked by 6'9" tall fixed-louver, operable shutters.

9. Roof: The hipped roof is covered with gray slate shingles and is in good condition. The wood cornice, painted white, measures 2'10" in length and extends 16" from the building.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The hotel follows the double-pile plan. However, the two narrow stairways that lead to the attic and cellar were added later in the history of the building.
2. Flooring: The floor is constructed of quarter-sawn pine. The planks vary in width from $3\ 1/2$ " to 5" and run north to south except in the northwest room where the original boards were replaced with $2\ 1/2$ " planks which run east to west.
3. Wall/ceiling finish: Exterior walls are plaster on brick while the partition walls are plaster on wood. All are painted. The original walls of the center hall were wallpapered with early twentieth century paper before the hall was lowered. This paper can still be seen under the attic floor.
4. Trim
 - a. cornices: The original 3' 5" Tuscan wood cornice is the same in all of the four rooms. It projects 1' 5" out from the wall.
 - b. chair rails: Encircling all four rooms and the central hallway, the chair rail is $2\ 1/2$ " deep and 2' off the floor.
5. Door and window surrounds: The door surrounds are 6" painted wood moldings. The window surround elements 7" inward towards the window. The paneled molding design of the surround flanks both sides of with window. The elegant, six-paneled interior doors are painted white. However, the original two 2' x 8' hallway doors contain four 14" x 11" window panes. The doors to the annex and adjoining range room, storage area and cellar were not originally there, but are of the same design as the other doors of the hotel.
6. fireplaces: The mantelpieces of Ionic cornice and frieze design can be seen on each of the three remaining fireplaces. The fourth fireplace, in the southeast room, was walled in when the room was converted into a servery for the Colonnade Club Dining Facility.

D. Site and surroundings

1. orientation: Hotel E is located on the West Range at the southwest corner of the historical section of the University of Virginia.
2. site: Covered with grass, the surrounding area slopes downward towards the south. In the back, remains of serpentine walls surround the gardens and form the alleys to the lawn. The entrance to the garden is directly across from the rear entrance of the Hotel.

PART III. ENDNOTES AND SOURCES

A. Endnotes

¹William B. O'Neal, Pictorial History of the University of Virginia (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1968), p. 1

²Ibid, p 2.

³Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia, 1818-1819 (New York, 1920) Vol. I, pp. 216-218.

⁴Ibid, p. 221.

⁵Ibid, p. 222.

⁶Minutes, University of Virginia Rector and Visitors, April 3, 1820, p. 26.

⁷Bruce, p. 218-219.

⁸Ibid, p. 219.

⁹Ibid, pp. 220-221.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 222.

¹¹Ibid, p. 227.

¹²Ibid, p. 228.

¹³Ibid, pp. 227-228.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 230.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 231.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 235.

¹⁷Interview with James Kinnard, University of Virginia historian.

¹⁸Bruce, pp. 233-235.

¹⁹Bruce, p. 236.

²⁰Interview with K. Edward Lay, professor of architecture, University of Virginia.

²¹Kinnard interview.

²²Interview with Chester Titus, President of Colonnade Club, University of Virginia.

²³Lay interview.

²⁴Kinnard interview.

²⁵Kinnard interview.

B. Bibliography

1. Books:

Bruce, Philip Alexander. History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919. Five volumes, New York. MacMillan Co., 1920.

O'Neal, William Bainter. Pictorial History of the University of Virginia. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968.

2. Other sources:

Bradley, Harry and Reuman-Redenbaugh, Mary A., Pavilion IV, University of Virginia (University of Virginia, School of Architecture, Spring 1984).

Minutes of the University Rector and Visitors.

Interview, James Kinnard, University of Virginia historian

Interview, K. Edward Lay, professor of architecture, University of Virginia.

Interview, Chester Titus, Dean of Residence Life, President of Colonnade Club.

PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, professor of architecture, during the fall 1986 semester. Students involved were Ruth T. Broderick and Ellen T. Honigstock. This documentation was transmitted to the Library of Congress in March, 1988 by Holly K. Chamberlain, HABS historian.